Opinion

Vernal Express

OPINION

LOCAL MEDIA HAVE TIME TO DIG DEEPER

By Les Bowen
Express Editor

Just hours after we put last week's issue to bed, I was made aware that KSL-5 had been at the Daggett County Commission meeting to cover the firing of County Attorney Bryan Sidwell. And they had a report broadcast that same day.

"Scooped again," I moaned.

The Vernal Express wouldn't get a chance to run a story for eight days. That's eight days for every daily on the Wasatch Front to run a front page story and it's a week all four of the big upstate TV stations to run live feeds. It's eight days for the radio station to do our job faster than we can. And we'd be the last ones to print the story.

But I was reminded as I finally got an interview Monday with a Daggett County commissioner who was willing to go on record, that sometimes the little community weeklies have an advantage over the bigger media.

Of course, I'm preaching to the choir. Readers of this week's opinion page know the value of a community newspaper. That's why they picked it up at a newsstand or are regular subscribers.

Our readers know we're closer to the action when news breaks. Last summer, when the Neola wildfires broke out, reporters from the Vernal Express and Uintah Basin Standard were the first on the scene. Last month when a plane made a crash landing on U.S. Highway 191 north of Vernal, the Vernal Express provided photo footage the upstate media.

But this week was another kind of success. Every other media outlet in the state had to get to press or on the air as soon as possible. We had a week to allow tempers to cool and to start working through our sources to get the story and find the pieces everyone else missed.

It's the combination of living in the communities we cover and sometimes having a later deadline on our side that allows us to dig a little deeper and tell the story that no one else could. Hopefully, we were successful.

BERTHA BUTTERBEAN

Why I read books

By Dana Colovich
Guest Writer

Whenever I get a little spare time to use for my entertainment, I pick up one of the several books that I am currently reading. They are scattered about the house in strategic places like the bathroom, on the nightstand, on the desk, in my handbag, at the bottom of the hamper or behind the toaster. It takes a little stealth and ingenuity to get a reading break some days.

If I always have a book handy, I don't have to waste time or steps tracking one down. Also I get to press forward on all fronts at the same time if I wish.

Father B. heads for the family room and the television if he thinks he deserves some relaxation. I have tried to enlighten him about the superiority of reading over watching the channel panel, but he's stubborn.

Maybe I can convince a few of you. There are several distinct and far-out-ahead advantages of reading over viewing, and I guess I shall just have to point them out.

The biggest overall benefit in reading is the total control you have over the media. You are not forced to suffer the fat ads, the car wars, the think drinks, the eat-outs, the watch-the-rabbit segments, or any other commercial messages.

Books aren't selling anything. If they throw in a tiny bit of hype, is is just inside the front cover and you can skip it if you want to. Books don't have an interruption thrown into the middle of the "who-dun-it" passage either.

You can further exercise control by simply turning a page or pages if you come to a boring, rotten or stupid part. You can chuck half of the book if you want to and still find out which guy was the bad guy. You just turn to the last page.

Then say you try watching a TV show and you are right in the middle of the good part—the part where the guy meets the girl—and the phone rings. And it's your mother and she is having a crisis. (Usually she can't get her TV to work.) Do you say to her "Wait until this show is over and I'll call you back?" No, you must walk away from the best part, and it doesn't wait for you. Well, not with my low-tech TV anyway.

But with your book, if you were just getting to the romantic part, you grab a grocery receipt, or a toothpick, or even a sock, and mark your place. You take care of the crisis, and when you return to your book. "ta-da," there it is waiting for you, right where you left off. You just pick it up and resume the story, and you didn't miss a thing. Furthermore, you don't ever have to miss the whole book because you had to go to a meeting.

And then, books are cheaper than televisions. The only cost a dollar or so when you return them to the library, if you had too many meetings, that is. Even if you buy them, you have titles to select from later on, or gifts for friends.

Your favorite show will be broadcast when someone else says it will, and it will probably not be when you can watch it. My books on the other hand broadcast whatever I want, whenever I want it. They never have to share time with an auxiliary such as an X-box hooked up to them either.

I know what you are thinking: Bertha is a total technical schmuck. She probably doesn't even own a DVD player, Well, I do, and getting the DVD player to work is where the difficulty comes in. (I am quite a bit like my mom.) Books you just pick up and flip pages. They don't require two remotes with working batteries and the brain of a teenager to make them speak to you.

I have an iPod too, onto which I download audiobooks. I can work it. But when I fall asleep listening to the audio, it goes on without me and I have to rewind to find my place which is much more annoying than picking my book up from the floor. Books usually fall onto the page you had open anyway.

These are only the practical advantages, I haven't even gotten into the intellectual reasons for reading, which I won't discuss because there isn't much room for comparison.

Okay, lucky for you, I'm done with this diatribe now, and I need a rest. Isn't there a book somewhere around? Oh, yes, right here behind the computer.

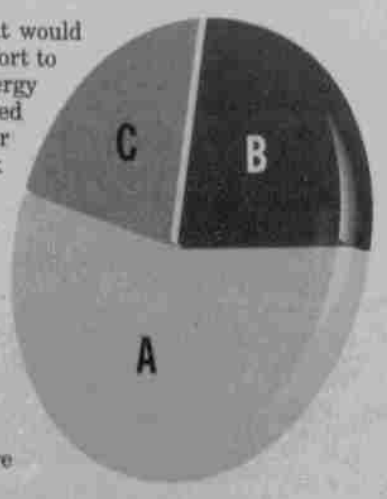
Web opinion poll

Each week the *Vernal Express* offers an online poll to its readers. To participate in the poll, visit www.vernal.com and click on the opinion link. Polls are not scientific and represent the opinions of voluntary Internet users. New polls are posted every two weeks and printed results represent voting as of Tuesday morning. If you have an idea for an opinion poll, e-mail it to editor@vernal.com.

Question for this week

Rep. Chris Cannon introduced a bill that would remove the public comment period in an effort to streamline the approval process for new energy production. In particular, Cannon cites the need for rapid development of oil shale and other alternative fuel sources. What do you think of Cannon's proposal?

a) It's about time they struck a blow against NEPA. (54%)
b) There's not enough regulation. Cannon is moving in the wrong direction. (25%)
c) What's NEPA? The public is allowed to comment? (21%)



This poll question will continue for one more week.

Question for next week

The Uintah Community Center was delayed several months and ran over budget. Was the recreation facility worth the wait and financial cost?
a) Yes.
b) No.

Public Forum - Letters to the Editor

What is your opinion? The *Vernal Express* welcomes letters from its readers concerning any subject pertinent to the Uintah Basin. There are no restrictions on contents, if in good taste and not libelous or vindictive. Letters may be edited for grammar and style, length and content. All letters must be submitted exclusively to the *Vernal Express* and bear the full name, signature, phone number and address of the writer or writers. Letters for the sole purpose of expressing thanks to individuals or groups will not be printed in this forum. Submissions may be mailed to 54 N. Vernal Ave., Vernal, UT 84078; faxed to 435-789-8690 or sent by e-mail to editor@vernal.com The name or names of the persons submitting letters must appear on all published letters. Letters express the opinion of the writer or writers and are not necessarily the opinion of the *Vernal Express*.

Timothy sentence was lenient

Dear editor,

The sentencing of Phillip Timothy is interesting (Vernal Express, July 2). Judge Atherton was so harsh; without mercy. She could have sentenced him to 240 years but she gave him six months, not in prison, but in jail. If Timothy had pleaded guilty to all of the 156 felonies, she could have sentenced him to the end of the world.

A few years ago, I was indicted for having a shell in the barrel of a handgun, in ignorance of the Utah Concealed Handgun Statute. I was sentenced to six months for that minor infraction.

Restitution. According to the lawyer DeLand, "nobody got hurt. Every single penny was returned." One of the felonies was called racketeering. That means a system of dishonesty. Who knows all who got hurt? Who's counting? Most of the "hurtees" probably don't even know they were swindled.

Poor Timothy. His life will be interrupted for six months. He may go bankrupt from not being able to sweat, while riding that tractor, to harvest his hay on his newly purchased farm. (Where did that money come from?). He won't be able to service his fleet of Hummers, cars, trucks, trailers, motorcycles, etc. He won't be able to see his huge, new home completed. He lost his insurance license. He has to pay $104,000 investigation costs and leave $300,000 in a trust fund to reimburse unknown "hurtees."

His lawyer had no shame in trying to defend him. Does Timothy have any shame? Has he embarrassed his family? Are they innocent bystanders or did they receive benefits from his racketeering profits? Now, his family is going to have to drive clear to Salt Lake City to visit with him. What a hardship.

If the authorities continue to pursue white collar crime in Vernal, we may lose services from our insurance agents, bankers, realtors and politicians for at least six months.

Ben Mahaffey
Vernal

Shale oil panacea or plague

Recently I was with a friend while she was filling up her mid-sized sedan at a local gas station – $65! I couldn't believe what I was seeing.

How often do you fill up I asked? About once a week she responded. While I felt sympathetic for her I also felt a sense of satisfaction.

A satisfaction knowing that my recent decision to live free from the grasp of petroleum was the right one! My high horse happens to be a bicycle and I'll stay on it for just a few more seconds before addressing the topic of a inane energy initiative.

Oil has us where it wants us, meaning no matter how much they charge for a barrel we'll be forced to answer with more and more of our pay checks going into the oil companies pockets. By declaring your independence from oil you'll find new freedom and joy – there I'll step off now.

The rapid climb in the price of a barrel of oil from $55 to $135 has just about everyone wondering what is next. How will our country handle or meet its growing energy needs? Like the dubious doctor selling snake oil lots of people are promising to help. And If one looks only at the sugar coated promises coming from the corporations like Shell, Chevron, and OSEC (Oil Shale Exploration Company) they may be tricked into believing that a band-aid is sufficient to remedy a severed limb.

The sheer optimistic view point of these corporations and their press releases demand a thorough investigation into their claims. After all if something looks too good to be true, it probably is. The companies, driven by greed, would have us believe that the 1.5 trillion barrels of oil locked away in the shale can be extracted with minimal effort and very little effect on the environment. They would also have us believe that by allowing them unfettered access there will be immediate relief from high pump prices.

This simply isn't the case. The extraction of petroleum from shale threatens to devastate wilderness areas, contaminate our groundwater, and ultimately does nothing to help curb the countries CO2 emissions. Our President is asking Congress to eliminate the "old and outdated restrictions" and allow completely unrestricted access to the nations public lands. If this happens God help us, for there is nothing old and outdated about prudence.

Jason Dilworth
Vernal

Jurrius' return will save tribe

Dear Editor,

On June 26, the Business Committee held their information meeting. Nothing new was reported.

Irene Cuch still thinks that the monies that are being given to the membership and for the government have always been in the tribal accounts. She seems to forget the tribal budget was $12 million a year. Because of an account named "emergency assistance," the tribe's budget was always in the red by $1 million!

Resolution No. 98-285 was enacted to furlough tribal employees because of the short falls in the budget. It was approved under Chairman Ronald Wopsock's leadership.

John Jurrius and his colleagues, with the people's adopted financial plan, doubled the tribe's budget. The membership went from receiving $25 dividends to $907 dividend utilizing the financial plan. Since, the new council took over, we are down to $750 monthly dividend with no new investments. So how can Irene back up her theory? Money has always been there?

The financial plan is mandated by two referendums. The first one passed in December 2001 when 396 members voted "for" and only 42 opposed. The second was voted on in January 2007; 580 members voted "for" and only 109 said "no." That makes a grand total of 976 votes for the financial plan and a mere 151 votes against.

Referendums, which are binding and conclusive on the Business Committee, which part do they not understand? The people have voted for the financial plan and for John Jurrius to keep doing investments for the tribe. There were only a handful of people who started all this trouble that the tribe is going through now. There is a famous quote from Abraham Lincoln from the 1860s that describes them: "The question is whether in a free government the minority have the right to break up a government whenever they choose?"

In a June 25 article in the Uintah Basin Standard, Lezlee Whiting acknowledged that the current six-member committee had successfully run their campaigns on "anti-Jurrius" platforms. So this means that the current Business Committee never intended to follow the financial plan or support John Jurrius as the advisor. So why did they say in their campaign speeches that they supported the plan?

The financial plan mandated using John Jurrius as the financial advisor to implement the financial plan. We need to get John Jurrius back and the financial plan going as it was intended!

Kinsey Jenks
Fort Duchesne

Reader bemoan Ute termination

Dear Editor,

As I sit here thinking of what and how wrong the Ute Partition Act of 1954 (H.R. 671) was for all concerned, I am left with pain within myself, not only for those who it affected and their descendants and what it has done to them, and all that was lost.

Those effected by H.R. 671 are not able to provide for their children to have the chance at a better education. Tribal members can send their children off to schools at the expense of the tribe or BIA programs. H.R. 671 prevents us from earning a living even if qualified to apply for a job with the tribe or applying for any tribal benefits, even health care.

These 490 terminate Utes, as they have grown up, have had to adjust and adapt in order to make it. Some have and some have not. This bill has put tribal members against each other, as you can see so often in your letters to the editor.

A while back I was talking to a person who is a mixed-blood who was terminated as I was, but this person married a member of the tribe, and the statement was made to me was, "I live on Indian land, this house was built by the tribe, my children's schooling is paid by the tribe, so I am not going to say anything that would offend them."

Now do you see how this law has damage the relationship between family members, and when I try to explain on how wrong this was, the response is the same: "We live here do not tell us how to live."

I have done our family history that goes back to 1816 in the Whiterocks area. I have many family members who are members of the tribe, and so many of us are so closely related and it is hurtful to hear them say that I have this and that or you can't do that because you're not a tribal member.

This person said that maybe it would be better if the tribe were terminated, and that they would get all that money. But be reminded if the tribe was terminated, all members would be subject to the same thing that happened to the 490.

My question to you as members and tribal committee would you be ready for that?

Let me put these questions to you. After termination what would happen to the elders? Where would the jobs come from? How would you provide for your families? What about your medical needs?

These are just a few of the things that you would face, and I am wondering if you have ever thought, or if you have asked any of your tribal committee if this could happen. Be aware that as long as H.R. 671 is on the books and the laws are still in effect, it could happen to you.

Have you ever wondered why tribes terminated the 1950-1960 were mostly restored, it was because it was so harmful to those tribes. Federal recognition has been restored to more than 40 tribes since 1973. Thirty-one of those tribes were restored through court order, and the balance restored by congressional legislation.

I was told that if you lived off the reservation and you were not a member of the tribe that you were not Indian, but white. I don't live out there, but let me remind you I am still Indian. It is in my blood by birth. My mother, grandmother, grandfather and so on, were Uintah Utes. And now you are saying we are not, I have family members who have jobs there and are on different committees for the tribe. We are of the same ancestry, so explain to me why should there be a difference between us if you check the relationship of the members we are all tied together.

So I say to you all of the 490-plus, I care for you. And to all of you who are family to me that are tribal members, I care for your welfare also!

Paul D. Reyos
St. George

July 4 celebration in Lapoint spectacular

Dear editor,

At 6 a.m. on July 4, citizens from Lapoint met on top of Freedom Hill to join the Boy Scouts and American Legion Veterans for a flag ceremony and pledge of allegiance.

The veterans fired a impressive sunrise salute.

As the flag caught the morning breeze, my heart thrilled as it always does and the words of a song came – "And I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free. And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me. And I'll gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today. For there ain't no doubt, I love this land. God bless the USA."

There is an LDS scripture that reads hat this is a land – choice above all other lands and those who inherit it must serve the God of this land who is Jesus Christ or be swept off. If they are swept off, it will be because of iniquity.

Are we ripened in iniquity yet? Pray God that we are not.

Dorothy Luck
Lapoint

Labrum thanks Basin supporters

Dear Editor,

It was a huge personal disappointment to lose the Republican primary election for the House of Representatives, District 54.

When you sign your name up on that dotted line to become a potential candidate, your life changes. Many elements of life are involved in one's decision to become a candidate, but you realize your name is out there for any and all to say what they want to say about you.

I am humbled by the loss, especially since I am the one who lost the seat after 28 years of great service by Alarik Myrin, Bev Evans and Gordon Snow from our region. I say thank you to those three for their great service.

Shan and I are very grateful for the support we have received from our family, friends, neighbors and other associates. We say thank you to each and every one of you for your sacrifice of time and means in behalf of my campaign. It has been my privilege and honor to be your candidate.

May we all continue to work together to strengthen our homes, our neighborhoods, our communities and our region.

Once again I thank you for your support and encouragement. It has been a very growing adventure of life.

David Labrum
Roosevelt

Jurrius ban is act of tyranny

Dear Editor,

The banning of Mr. John Jurrius by the current Business Committee from all trust lands is nothing more than "tyranny." The dictionary's definition of tyranny is oppressive and unjust government, very cruel and unjust use of power and authority.

The Business Committee's action was based on nothing but lies and pure jealousy. Telling the Coalition (tribal members) and the allottees (land owners) who we can associate with on our own reservation is a civil rights violation, both tribal and under the U.S. Code, which are all federal laws.

In the first place, the B.C. has no authority over allotted trust lands owned by individual tribal members.

This is a shameful act by the six individuals who have no respect for our rights as free people. To see this type of behavior in our own country is disgusting and will not go unanswered. If you think it's just the tribal members who are getting the shaft, think again. The Wetlands Project is being shoved down the throats of non-tribal members by the same rogue tribal government, that hides behind sovereign immunity to do their dirty work.

The Business Committee's actions will do nothing but open up a can of worms.

Stewart Pike
Myton